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STATUS OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Symposium on Social Development

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, in decision 2/2, adopted at its second session, noted the activities undertaken by the Secretariat in preparation for the Summit, including, inter alia, the organization of symposia, seminars and workshops on issues of direct relevance to the Summit. The Preparatory Committee also encouraged the United Nations, the United Nations system, Governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and institutes to continue their initiatives to support the preparation for the Summit, including seminars, workshops and symposia.

2. The Symposium on Social Development was organized by China's Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Secretariat for the World Summit for Social Development. It took place in Beijing, from 7 to 9 October 1994, at the invitation of the Government of the People's Republic of China. The Secretary-General wishes to express his appreciation to the Government of China for hosting the Symposium. The report of the Symposium, prepared by the Secretariat, is annexed to the present note.

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Annex

Symposium on Social Development

Beijing, China, 7-9 October 1994

I. The concept of social development and its relation with economic development

1. *Social development emerged, as a concept and as a policy, in the context of the distinction between developed and developing countries.*

(a) As long as societies have existed, individuals have attempted to modify and improve them, either gradually or through radical intellectual and ideological revolutions. The Confucian idea of "great harmony", to be achieved through moral perfection, benevolence and respect for nature and the universe, is both an individual pursuit and a project for a good society. From Thomas More to Fourier, Bakunin and Owen, moral philosophers constructed ideal societies and utopias on the basis of a denunciation of the injustices they observed. Fraternity of the deprived and ultimately of all human beings was the central dream of the visions of social change and social progress.

(b) After the second World War, in the wake of the decolonization movement, the newly independent countries embarked on a process of development conceived as an expansion and diversification of economic activities, a rise in levels of living measured in terms of material welfare and the provision of essential public services, notably for health and education. Different theories and strategies for development were elaborated. They all had in common the preeminence of the need for economic growth, a central role of the State and public authorities, and the call for international assistance and cooperation. In countries undertaking economic and social transformation, social progress was both a set of precise goals and the mobilization of all segments of society towards such goals; the participation of all in the productive process was a critical ingredient in the pursuit of equality and prosperity. In the industrialized countries with a mixed or market economy, social affairs and social issues referred to the relations between workers and employers, to social security and to various forms of social welfare and social allowances. Health, education, housing were sectors in themselves and not consistently labelled as social. In fact, the concept of social development was not widely used, neither as a policy framework, nor as a tool for organizing ministries and public services. Overall, during those decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, social development was either an addition of social sectors, or a complement, albeit on the weak side, of economic development.

2. *At this point of human history, an ambitious and comprehensive vision of social development is required.*

(a) Social development, as a philosophy of man and society, should mean the development of all individuals in terms of dignity, knowledge, virtue, compassion and creativity, the progress of society in its capacity to ensure security, peace, production and exchange, and respect for basic rights and freedom, and the development of harmonious relations between individuals, communities and their physical environment. In that sense social development should be social progress and should become again a mobilizing philosophy or utopia.

(b) Social development, as a concept for political action, should be both a set of policies and the main dimension of all policies at all levels of decision, be it international, regional, national or local. Direct policies for social development pertain to the traditional social sectors - education, health, housing, social security, protection of children and families, assistance to those who are unemployed or fall into poverty - to questions of distribution of goods, services and opportunities, to issues of violence and intolerance, and to requirements for the participation of individuals, groups and communities in the political process. The policies which should integrate the need for social development as a core dimension and a central exigency include all policies for economic growth and development, all financial and fiscal policies, and all measures affecting the security of individuals and communities. Such a broad concept of social development is particularly relevant for the Social Summit.

(c) Social development, as a process, implies:

- the participation and efforts of all individuals; there is a harmonious relation and a continuum between the pursuit of happiness, self-realization, and the welfare of society, or common good, through a culture of respect for other human beings and the universe, fraternity and responsibility; neither the blind pursuit of self-interest, nor an imposed mobilization for the collective interest, are compatible with social development;

- the development and good functioning of an active network of institutions - from local community organizations to the State apparatus - through which individuals, groups and other social actors interact in a large variety of ways and with cultural and legal codes of behaviour and rules of the game which are understood and respected by all; institutional development, including the institution of the market, is a key to social development, and, together with cultural development, a criteria for assessing its quality and durability;

- constant reference by the main actors - notably the public authorities but also the media, private enterprises and other institutions of society - to the central objectives of social development; any society requires a sense of direction, blended with a feeling of security and stability; at the same time, social development implies moderation and the realization that there is no perfect society, that failures are a source of learning and improvement and that there are many paths to human progress and social harmony.

3. *This comprehensive vision of social development is made necessary by the current features of the process of modernization.*

The current process of growing interdependence between economies and societies at the world level is a major phenomenon of our time. More exchange, more trade, more communications between individuals and nations are positive trends. This evolution needs, however, to be informed, shaped, inspired and sometimes controlled by a vision of social development at the world level which would aim at:

(a) maintaining and developing a variety of cultures, philosophies, religions and ways of being and thinking;

(b) promoting universal values of human dignity, freedom, tolerance, solidarity and respect for fellow human beings;

(c) placing the concept of sustainability at the centre of all human actions and policies; this concept, born from the damage inflicted on our world by a predatory and careless productivist culture, ought to be rooted in values of responsibility vis-à-vis humankind and future generations;

(d) addressing global threats and problems such as pollution, organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, violence, epidemics, and physical or cultural aggression against the dignity of the human person, through increased cooperation at all levels and through the mobilization of financial resources;

(e) ensuring that the power to influence events and the power to control the various forms of the process of globalization and interdependence are distributed as widely as possible, and is exercised with an acute sense of humility and responsibility vis-à-vis the common good of humankind;

(f) fostering international cooperation in all its forms, including for exchange of views and experience and learning from successes and failures, and encouraging research and the development of scientific attitudes and spirit.

4. *Social development requires economic growth.*

Economic growth is the result of initiative and investment and a goal of most contemporary societies. It should be considered as a means of advancing human welfare and should be shaped and guided by a comprehensive vision of social development. In order to place the economy at the service of human needs and social goals, all economic, financial and fiscal policies, including on investments, taxation, wages and employment, ought to be informed by social considerations and social goals. This has rarely been the case in recent decades. Culturally, institutionally and politically, economic growth and an economic type of rationality in the culture of decision makers have dominated the world scene and the spirit of the time during the second part of the twentieth century. One of the major intellectual and political challenges for the World Social Summit is to reconcile economic growth with the values, principles and objectives of social development.

5. *Social development encompasses the concept of human development.*

The concept of human development has been elaborated recently in a context of strong emphasis on the virtues and efficiency of open and dynamic markets, a realization of the critical role of cultures, attitudes, and knowledge and training in the process of development, and a sombre diagnosis of the persistence of poverty and social misery and tensions in certain parts of the world. Human development places emphasis on human beings as both the object of the development effort and the agents of development. It represents a shift from a commodity-centred strategy of development to a people centred strategy. Its objective is to fulfil the potential of people by enlarging their capabilities and their participation in their own development. The enhancement of human capabilities and opportunities, not the enlargement of GNP, should be the ultimate objective of development policy. Within an economic rationality and language, a human development strategy places emphasis on human capital formation; recognizes that investment in human capital can economize on the use of physical capital and the exploitation of natural resources; suggests that the benefits from investing in people are in general more evenly spread than the benefits from investing in physical and natural capital; and stresses the complementarities among the various types of human capital expenditure, for example primary health care, nutrition and the ability of children to learn, or health of women, their education, and life expectancy. A human development approach emphasizes the positive linkages between various social and economic policies.

II. Methods of measuring social development

6. *Data, indicators and studies and knowledge of living conditions and various aspects of the functioning of society, are indispensable for information and decision-making, for the setting of targets and the monitoring of objectives, and for the forecasting of social and cultural changes.*

(a) The development of social statistics and indicators reflects a greater interest in questions of social development and a realization that economic data do not apprehend the full reality of social relations and social trends.

(b) In several parts of the world, there is a long tradition of statistical development and social reporting. There is sometimes a wealth of data which complicate their interpretation. In other countries and regions, there is a dearth of reliable information on the basic aspects of social questions.

(c) In countries and regions where basic data are missing or of poor quality, innovative techniques which are often less costly than traditional methods such as censuses, should be encouraged; they include the use of observation posts and of simplified questionnaires, of proxies and even of "travelling social development assessors"; such non-conventional methods of data collection can be particularly useful to apprehend social development trends and problems at the level of households. There are also methods,

ways of thinking and attitudes which are required to correct the limitations of macroeconomic data.

(d) A number of efforts have been made to develop indexes, such as the human development index or the social progress index, aiming at capturing the main aspects of social trends and problems; technical issues related to the level of aggregation of data, to the question of distribution, and to other adjustments notably to gender, have political connotations and ought to be solved in an ad hoc manner; indexes are particularly useful for comparison over time either at the national, regional or subregional levels.

7. *Exchange of views on the various aspects of the development and use of data, indicators and indexes are useful at the international level and among specialists.*

(a) A proper assessment, understanding and monitoring of the core issues of the Social Summit and of the comprehensive approach to social development required by contemporary societies, call for further effort by the international community to develop adequate and usable data and indicators.

(b) A dialogue between statisticians, researchers and policy makers is indispensable. In the context of the Social Summit, policy makers and researchers should develop their understanding of the decisions agreed on, of the contours of current social concern, and of the objectives and targets adopted. Apparently straightforward data such as the ratio of active to inactive persons in a given country require careful interpretation from social scientists and researchers.

(c) International organizations should enhance their efforts to facilitate exchanges among experts, to foster the dialogue between researchers and policy-makers and to act as "moderators" for productive use of data and aggregated indicators.

8. *Statistics, indicators and indexes capture only part of social reality, must be interpreted with care and must be complemented by studies in various disciplines.*

(a) Statistics, indicators and indexes are developed in response to demands from societies and their governments, always with a time lag and always in an imperfect manner; policy makers should never forget that indicators are only proxies and should not use them as objectives. At present, much progress is, for instance, required for data on the environment.

(b) In some cases, detailed statistics and indicators on social problems and reports based on such data become part of the political debate and acquire a strong visibility for ordinary citizens through the press and other media. Such visibility can facilitate the tasks of governments, for instance to redress regional imbalances or to address specific inequalities within the population; at the same time, care must be taken not to over

emphasize the significance of data which always remain partial; social indicators are policy tools, sometimes for forecasting and early warning; they should not, however, be a substitute for policy-making based on the participation of citizens and groups involved in the process of social development.

(c) Indicators can reveal the state of a society; it could be argued, for instance, that indicators of the situation of disabled people reveal the quality of a society by expressing the attention given to its weakest members. It has also been said that indicators of the situation of women express the true level of social development of a society. The same is true of statistics and indicators on the situation and level of participation of the poorest groups. The development and use of such indicators suggesting the quality of social development should not be confused with the development of statistics which are essentially instruments for a better understanding of social trends and problems.

(d) The choice at the international and national levels of particular data and indicators to characterize the state of social development implies compromises between the need for universality and comparisons, and the need to reflect the uniqueness of national and local circumstance and cultures; science, including statistical techniques, both reflects and shapes social reality.

(e) The collection and interpretation of data and indicators is not a substitute for studies, research and the elaboration of sociological and philosophical theories on the functioning of societies; at a time of great emphasis on quantitative approaches, the need for sociological studies should be emphasized; recommendations from the World Summit for Social Development should include the further development and appropriate use of data and indicators at all levels of information and decision making, in the context of the development of social sciences to acquire a better understanding of social problems and aspirations; theoretical and empirical research on social development is both a political and intellectual pursuit.

III. Strategies for alleviating poverty and protecting the environment

9. *Poverty is a universal problem affecting individuals and groups in all societies.*

(a) Recently, there has been an increase in both the number and proportion of poor people in Africa and Latin America as well as in the former Soviet Union, and pockets of poverty have also reappeared in industrialized countries. In spite of considerable progress during the last decade, Asia still has the largest number of people in poverty. In China, for example, it is estimated that 80 million people are below the poverty line. This represents very significant progress achieved during two decades of high economic growth and a spectacular increase in average per capita income. Poverty in China now represents important, and apparently rising, regional

differences. There is a concentration of poor people in the arid and mountainous regions of the west, northwest and southwest. There are also poor people in and around the major cities. There is also, in China as in other countries undertaking rapid economic changes, a "floating" population estimated at around 70 million. These people have been displaced by social and economic changes in their regions of origin and, mostly, are in search of economic opportunities.

(b) Poverty is strongly related to unemployment and underemployment. While a very large number of jobs are being created in regions and countries experiencing a rapid rate of economic growth - particularly in small industries and in the service sector - there is still an important "labour force surplus" in most developing countries. Even when demographic growth has been curbed, there is often an excess of labour capacity in agriculture and in the traditional industrial sector. These people are officially unemployed and, more commonly, underemployed. When the economy grows they have a chance to find a livelihood. When public services and public assistance are well developed, they are poor but not destitute. In the absence of both growth and a network of protective services, poverty becomes a dominant feature of society.

10. *There are various ways of defining poverty and assessing its prevalence.*

(a) Poverty can be seen as a condition of basic deprivation. Undernourishment, ill health, illiteracy and insecurity are forms of deprivation. The manner in which a person experiences a particular deprivation, for instance hunger, depends partly on the characteristics of this person - age, gender, physical fitness - and partly on his or her ability to acquire or receive the commodities - food, clean water, - that help address the problem.

(b) The concepts of absolute and relative poverty remain valid. Relative poverty will, by definition, always exist. In a society with a high level of affluence, and perceived as such by all its members, relative poverty could become "relative affluence", but the notion of difference, or inequality, would remain. Within the current way of thinking, it is impossible to imagine a society with perfect equality, not only of income, but also of other attributes of welfare. Absolute poverty, or deprivation from an essential element of well being, has also graduations. There is the poverty that endangers one's life, the poverty that affects one's health, and the poverty that creates a permanent feeling of insecurity. In the context of the World Summit for Social Development, while the goal of mankind should be the eradication of poverty, governments might be invited to address first, and with precise national and/or regional targets, the question of extreme poverty or deprivation.

(c) A narrow conception of poverty confines itself to income or consumption of households or individuals. A broad conception of poverty refers to level of nourishment, incidence of mortality and morbidity, level of education, absence of various forms of discrimination, and other aspects of what is commonly considered in the world as a decent way of living. There is no perfect correlation between trends or levels of poverty

measured in the narrow manner and trends and levels of poverty in the larger sense. Everywhere in the world, there are people who have an adequate level of nourishment while suffering from lack of basic amenities and services.

(d) Poverty lines and statistics on the number of people in absolute and relative poverty, cannot capture the economic, social, and cultural context in which poor people find themselves, nor the manner in which they experience their condition. Questions of self-esteem and hope are of particular importance. A "passage" through deprivation, with clear prospect for a solution, has a totally different meaning for an individual or a family than a "situation" of poverty, with months and years of accumulated grief and despair. This is also why an "atmosphere" of economic dynamism and growth is of such great importance. Apart from the direct creation of employment opportunities, it helps prevent feelings of alienation stemming from material poverty.

11. *Poverty is not only material, but also moral and spiritual.*

In line with a broad approach to the problem of poverty, it should be emphasized that a number of social ills such as crime, drug addiction and the spread of communicable diseases, are strongly related to various forms of material and spiritual poverty and deprivation. In the same vein, a lessening of moral values and traditions often lead to the spreading of corrupt practices which impair efforts at reducing poverty and at improving the overall social harmony of a society. Still in the same vein, the importance of the family, both as a protection against poverty and as a primary beneficiary of anti-poverty policies, ought to be recognized. Poverty is often the result of a severance of the link of an individual with his or her family. This suggests also the need for a careful assessment of the reasons for poverty which may be individual, circumstantial or structural.

12. *Throughout the world, women are the primary victims of material deprivation.*

There is very strong empirical evidence and theoretical justification for a gender approach to poverty alleviation. Cross-cultural investigations have in recent years led to a better understanding of the relationship between gender and poverty. Poverty is the outcome of structural inequalities in entitlement to resources, and the weight of poverty falls more heavily on certain social groups, particularly women. An example of the particular plight of women is the difficult situation of young migrant women moving out of their villages in search of economic opportunities. This phenomenon is prevalent in countries undergoing rapid economic changes. Also, older women remaining in villages often suffer a decline in their status and living conditions. This gender approach calls for refinements in the definition of poverty and for diversified policies able to address the problem as a whole as well as the specific difficulties of women.

13. *Poverty alleviation requires a wide range of policies.*

(a) There are two means of acquiring the essential commodities and services that help a person to escape deprivation: private income and public services; this broad distinction should be kept in mind when designing and assessing policies for poverty alleviation; progress on one front - more private income through the opening of markets and growth - does not automatically lead to progress on the other front; in fact, in societies experiencing rapid structural and economic changes, a growing number of people are often deprived of basic public services and amenities, such as health and education. Balanced attitudes, policies and philosophies of what constitute a harmonious society are fundamental requirements for social development.

(b) Policies for poverty alleviation fall into four broad categories:

- direct provision by the government of goods and services, notably food, clothing, health care and education;

- widening of opportunities for livelihood for poor households through such measures as land redistribution, or distribution of assets and capital, or investments in infrastructure and grants or loans for agricultural development;

- employment generation or public works programmes; in relation to the question of surplus labour mentioned above, and in order to avoid massive migrations to urban areas as well as to alleviate poverty, concerted programmes of employment generation through public works schemes are of particular importance in China as well as other countries;

- increasing the incomes of households through price policies, price subsidies and higher purchasing prices for local products.

(c) The proper balance between these various policies must vary with local circumstances and with the overall strategies pursued at a particular time by a particular country. The success of poverty alleviation policies appears to be closely dependent, however, on the following factors:

- good administrative capabilities; poor areas often have poor local administration, and special efforts need to be made to develop the skills, sense of public service and integrity of local administrators and representatives of public authorities;

- sufficient financial resources; the financing of poverty alleviation schemes generally stems from taxes or other forms of government revenue, insurance schemes and partial payment by the users and beneficiaries; overall, public resources through taxes, both national or federal and local, ought to provide the bulk of the financing of anti-poverty schemes; this does not mean, obviously, that economic growth and a dynamic market are not essential ingredients of a strategy to lift levels of living of the population as a whole;

- positive impact of anti-poverty measures on initiative and economic growth; apart from the overall political and cultural atmosphere which largely determines and is influenced by the attitude of the public and the government vis-à-vis various forms of poverty, the direct and indirect effects of anti-poverty schemes on the economy need to be constantly reviewed; this refers to inflation as well as to the effects that, for example, free distribution of food might have on prices and on the income of small producers; public policies and market mechanisms have many complex relations.

14. *Policies for reducing poverty take place in an economic, social, cultural and political context which should shape their features and orientations.*

(a) In countries which are opening the economy to market initiatives and mechanisms, traditional poverty alleviation measures are being revised. Globally, there is a shift from relief to development - sometimes called "empowerment" - in the design of anti-poverty policies. This includes the concern for a proper macroeconomic environment, as well as measures to diversify products and structures in agriculture, the development of local enterprises on the basis of indigenous resources, change in ownership laws and practices, and clarification of property rights. A strong emphasis is placed on an efficient use of poverty alleviation funds, as well as on changes in attitudes of the people concerned to promote an entrepreneurial spirit. Sometimes these policies are labelled as an effort to "commercialize" the traditional economy.

(b) New policies and shifts of emphasis do not necessarily mean that traditional measures become obsolete. In all societies, assistance to the poor remains a necessity, a moral duty and an imperative of solidarity. In China a "Social Relief Law" is being developed for drafting and review in 1995. Five traditional guarantees - food, clothing, medical care, burial services, and education for orphans - are complemented by relief in case of natural disaster and unemployment. Minimal living standards will be established for urban and rural areas. Cooperatives and other forms of association and mutuality are encouraged.

(c) Monitoring, evaluation and continuous assessment of the effects on the groups concerned and on the overall economy and society are imperative features of anti-poverty policies. The results of specific measures, for instance privatization of land which was traditionally used as commons, are often ambiguous. There should be consistency of purpose but flexibility in approach. A group approach, for instance, is not always effective. The demand for change has to come from the individuals, but credit can sometimes be successfully given to small groups. On the other hand, the role of non-governmental organizations and mass organizations such as trade unions can be important in creating a chain reaction for positive change.

15. *Sustainable development and the eradication of poverty are strongly related goals.*

(a) Large numbers of people live in a poor environment and poverty is one of the causes of environmental degradation; the latter can be traced in

particular to availability and choices of technologies. There is a need to focus on the overall question of resources and their distribution between and within households. Strategies are required for protecting, regenerating and monitoring the use of natural resources. Deforestation and desertification remain dramatic global issues, and the disruption of ecological balance leads to a reduced ability to resist natural disasters and to alleviate poverty. Conversely, an improvement of the ecological environment brings social and economic benefits to all. One of the characteristics of poor regions is the absence of appropriate institutional arrangements to protect the environment. In the struggle against environmental degradation, technical, institutional and political issues cannot be separated.

(b) Rapid growth can be highly stressful to the environment and there is a link between environmental degradation and aspirations and patterns of consumption. The environment problem is global in nature and there is a need to lift people out of poverty while finding solutions to environment degradation. At the same time the statement that there is, on our earth "enough for everybody's needs and not enough for everybody's greed" remains absolutely correct. Sustainable development requires the reduction of poverty as well as a redefinition of affluence.

(c) Poverty and rapid population growth leads peoples to "squander" natural resources and destroy the environment; one of the main rationales, in certain regions, for encouraging reduced fertility is the promotion of sustainable patterns of development.

(d) Also, in many parts of the world, a renewed emphasis on rural development is required by the related objectives of reducing poverty, protecting the environment and ensuring a balanced overall social development; strategies to that effect include integrated environmental improvement such as afforestation, soil and water conservation, natural disaster prevention, and economic and fiscal measures to alleviate rural poverty and encourage agricultural development. The decline, at the world level, in the number of people involved in agricultural production - because of gains in productivity - ought not to generate uncontrolled urbanization and unsustainable patterns of development. The reduction of poverty and the protection of the environment require a strong role by governments and an active involvement of non-governmental and other private and public institutions.

(e) In March 1994, the State Council of the People's Republic of China adopted the "China Agenda 21 White Paper on Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century" in accordance with the commitment made by all Member States which participated in the 1992 Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. This strategy will be translated into concrete policies, targets and mobilization of resources for sustainable development, through the ninth five-year plan.

(f) To eradicate extreme poverty and create an economic basis for sustainable development, developing countries require the support of the international community. They often find themselves in a number of vicious

circles. For instance, some are forced to cut forests to export timber and gain foreign exchange. Issues of debt and trade have a very close relationship with the protection of the environment. The world sees a dramatic growth in the number of "environmental refugees", resulting from a deterioration of the ecological environment. Developed countries, given their resources and level of scientific and technological development, have a particular responsibility, bilaterally and through international organizations, to assist weaker partners and to protect the global environment.

IV. The role of Government and community organizations in social development

16. *Social development requires a leading role for Governments at all levels.*

(a) The ultimate responsibility for the well-being of all citizens resides with Government. And, Government is the broadest instrument of collective action that can promote human development and social progress. The Government expresses its role as a policy maker, notably to design strategies for social development, as a legislator, for instance to develop a proper legal system for the operation of the market, as an initiator of reforms, for example on the distribution of power between national, regional and local authorities, and as a provider of financial resources, for public services and the protection of the weakest.

(b) Government social development strategies can be divided into three broad components: the structure of incentives; the composition of public expenditure, and the implementation of structural reforms. In the first category are those policies that concern prices, access to markets, and discrimination against particular social groups, such as women and minorities. Factor markets, such as those for labour, capital and natural capital (land, air, water) are often far from efficient and need Government involvement to improve their functioning. In the second category lie many opportunities for the Government to find resources to promote social development through redistribution measures. In the third category are policies and institutional changes designed to achieve greater equity in the distribution of productive assets, to generate employment for the unemployed, and to provide a greater measure of food security, nutrition and other important social welfare needs of the population.

(c) Adequate, efficient and fair tax systems play an extremely important role in social development. At present, tax systems are generally regressive and ineffective. The bulk of government expenditure, including for the financing of social and other public services, cannot be drawn from indirect taxes. In the context of a comprehensive approach to social development, public expenditures which do not contribute to such development should be reduced to a minimum. Still in general terms, there should a reallocation of expenditures towards public activities which benefit the largest number of people.

(d) In terms of use of public expenditures, there is a long standing debate on the respective merits of selectivity versus universality in the provision of services and benefits. There seems to be a widespread view, at this point of time, that public services and benefits should be targeted on selected beneficiaries. Apart from issues of overall solidarity and social integration, a targeted approach raises a number of problems of feasibility, identification of the targeted groups, and enforcement cost. A mix of universality and selectivity, depending on the nature of the service and on national circumstances, should be encouraged.

(e) Given the decisive role of Government for social development, the overall question of the relations between state and society becomes extremely important. Accountability, transparency of decisions, and integrity of the public service, are crucial determinants of the trust of people for public authorities. Governments should be effective leaders of social development through their overall political discourse and through concrete actions and policies.

17. *Local Government has a key role to play in social development.*

In order to be effective, local authorities must take into account the relationship between society at large, economic factors, technological innovations, and social development. Local authorities ought also to establish precise plans in the context of a clear idea and strategy on the meaning and avenues for social development in the community. All elements of community development and of its amenities, notably infrastructure, transport, and areas for sports and leisure, are relevant to improvements in living conditions.

18. *There is a complementarity between the roles of governments, local authorities, and community organizations.*

(a) Non-governmental organizations are of growing importance in most regions of the world. Sometimes they play a major advocacy role, acting as critic, "conscience", and promoter of new ideas. Sometimes they have clearly identified sectoral purposes. In some countries there are mass organizations which in addition to their participation in the implementation of public policies, play an increasing role in the development of innovative measures and in the representation of the interests of their constituents. Non-governmental and other comparable organizations can be seen as intermediaries between public authorities, private enterprises, and individuals. More and more frequently, they also contribute to the financing of various social services at the local level.

(b) Non-governmental organizations are not substitutes for government responsibility and government action. They are at the service of their constituents and of the community at large. They contribute to the elaboration and implementation of policies that serve the general interest. They have a very special role in the treatment by society of its weakest members. A prominent example is the situation of disabled persons. Non-governmental organizations have made throughout the world, a decisive contribution to the changing of people's attitudes towards disability. The concept of a "society for all" has gained grounds. Non-governmental

organizations are important elements of the political process, and accountability, transparency of decisions and democratic forms of authority, are requirements which also apply to these organizations of society.

(c) Under different forms in different political settings, organizations of citizens at the village level also play an important role for social development. In China, village committees contribute to the provision of social services, the development of local economic activities, and the mediation of disputes. During the recent process of reform, heavy demands were sometimes placed on individuals. Peasants became responsible for inputs to the production process and for technical and welfare services. There was a new distribution of roles between individuals, households, and the collectives. During this process, problems occurred and there is now an effort to find a proper balance between individual and collective responsibilities. In other contexts, there is a comparable movement to find an adequate distribution of roles between governments, the "civil society", and the institutions of the market.

(d) Individuals are part of a variety of social networks, on the basis of residence, occupation, or private interest. Social development policies of all kinds reach them through these networks and community organizations. It is becoming more and more obvious that the maintenance of stable communities, in a global economy, characterized by high mobility of ideas, capital and, increasingly, labour, is one of the great issues of our time. Communities have a very large role to play in social development. They constitute the medium in which the greatest amount of popular participation can occur and where local resources can be made to serve most directly the needs of peoples. The role of communities, in this overall sense, should be part of the agenda of the Social Summit. It has a very strong relationship with social stability as a whole and with the feeling of security that individuals ought to have in order to be able to participate effectively in social development.

(e) At all levels, and from all actors - governments, local authorities, non-governmental and community organizations - the role of training and education is perhaps the most critical in all efforts to promote social development. Education has a technical, and cultural meaning. It is both the enhancement of the capacity of an individual to earn a livelihood, to integrate society, and to contribute to the overall harmony of such society. It cannot be dissociated from the basic human need to acquire knowledge, nor from the basic human responsibility to contribute to overall betterment of the human condition.

Appendix I

Summary of introductory statements

Opening address by Vice Premier Li Langing

The Vice Premier began his address by stating that the world of today is experiencing unprecedented and profound changes. Despite the prospect for peace, contradictions abound. There are still political conflicts in many "new regions" of the world; many countries, especially the least developed countries, are confronted with social problems of poverty, hunger, unemployment, diseases and environmental pollution. This poses a great challenge for the world. On the eve of the twenty-first century, the international community must re-examine its thinking and adopt a pragmatic attitude on the global issues of peace and development to promote economic development and social progress.

Mr. Li recalled that prior to the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, March 1995) and to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), several conferences dealing with economic and social development had been convened by the United Nations, including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the International Conference on Population and Development. This demonstrates that the international community has already recognized the interdependence of economic and social development; that economic development is a precondition for social development; and that social development is the starting point for economic development. China reaffirms that the main mission of the United Nations is to promote peace, security and development.

The Vice Premier observed that during the part 15 years, China had achieved considerable social progress; this was the best period in the nation's history. China, with 7 per cent of the world's farm land, has managed to feed 22 per cent of the world's population; average life expectancy has now reached 70 years; illiteracy rate of youth has been reduced to 7 per cent; urban unemployment rate is now down to 2-3 per cent; and the number of poor people in China has decreased from 250 million in 1978 to 80 million today.

At the same time, China is fully aware of the many social problems confronting its society. Among them is the tension that exists between economic development, population trends, natural resources and the environment; social structural and regional imbalances; and an inadequate social security system to satisfy the demands posed by a socialist market economy. The major tasks for the Government of China for the years to come will be to tackle and address these problems. China is currently formulating its national strategy and programme on social development for the years 1996-2010. Mr. Li expressed confidence that with hard work by the Government and the people of China, and with the support of the international community, the global target of reaching higher standard of living for the average people, the harmonization of economic and social development and the overall improvement of the society by the twenty-first century will be realized not only for China, but for the whole world.

Finally, Mr. Li pointed out that China, with her long history and cultural traditions, is pursuing its own path to social development. In doing so, China is eager to exchange experiences and extend its cooperation with other nations. Mr. Li pledged that China would do all it could to participate in the many diversified activities of the United Nations and to contribute to the prosperity and progress of humanity.

Statement by Madame Hao Jianxiu, Vice Chairperson, State Planning Commission and Vice Chairperson, China's PrepCom for World Summit for Social Development

Madame Hao stated that the question of social development had captured the attention of the international community; it was therefore most relevant that the Symposium on Social Development was taking place to examine the questions of poverty, the concept of social development and the role of the state in social development. China, a nation with an old heritage, is now the largest developing country in the world. Its concern for the well-being of people is not confined to China, but extends to the world as a whole. The World Summit for Social Development offers a major opportunity for the entire world to look closely at the question of social and human progress; the State Planning Commission of China pledges its full support to the preparatory work for the Summit. Madame Hao informed the group that China's Preparatory Committee for the Summit was established last year. It consists of 25 board members and 30 representatives and has organized the following activities to support the preparation of the Summit:

1. preparation of China's National Report, which was submitted to the second session of the Preparatory Committee of the Social Summit in New York in August 1994; the report describes past achievements and outlines future policies for social development for China;

2. defining the "All China social development programme" and deciding on the national goals, strategies and policy orientation for social development for the next 15 years;

3. convening of a Working Session on National Social Development by the State Council to discuss modification of China's social development policies for the years 1996-2010; this will be the first conference of this type ever held in China;

4. establishment of the Chinese Social Development Association, a non-governmental organization which shall assist the Government in playing an active role in the communities by participating in public services, training social workers, sponsoring international exchange, and promoting research work on social development;

5. holding of an Exhibition (24-30 September 1994) on the Achievements of Social Development in China, on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic;

6. holding of this International Symposium on Social Development (7-9 October 1994), with the hope that it will contribute in a pragmatic manner to the drafting of the final document for the Summit;

7. participating in other preparatory activities of the Summit, such as the Ministerial Meeting on Social Development organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (mid-October 1994).

With regard to the promotion of social integration, which is one of the core issues of the Summit, Madame Hao felt that three sets of relationships would need to be maintained:

- harmony between mankind and nature: there is only one earth and therefore the need to preserve the natural and ecological environment must be observed;

- harmony between mankind and society: by maintaining social stability, by providing every member of society with basic services, and by offering equal opportunities of participation to all;

- harmony between social development and economic growth: economic growth is the foundation for social development; rapid economic growth can, however, lead to social problems and governments must take appropriate corrective actions to promote social progress. In this regard, the participation of non-governmental organizations can be particularly useful.

Finally, Madame Hao appealed to the international community to adopt a pragmatic attitude and a spirit of "togetherness" in discussing the question of social development, so that the Declaration and Programme of Action could be adopted by consensus at the Social Summit.

Statement by Mr. Arthur N. Holcombe, UNDP Resident Representative

Mr. Holcombe welcomed the convening of the Symposium and expressed the hope that the meeting could help in laying foundations for the further strengthening of China's social development policies and programmes, and to enable them to achieve their longer term targets and social objectives.

He referred to the recent visit to China by the Secretary-General who not only pointed out the critical role of international peace-keeping in promoting global security but also the vital importance of sustainable social and economic development. The Secretary-General looks upon the Social Summit as a unique opportunity to turn the world's attention to the gravest challenges to human welfare in the decades ahead, and to mobilize the international and local commitment and resources necessary to address them successfully. The Summit provides the opportunity for governments, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society to focus attention on the critical social issues; to share information, ideas and experience; to frame priority social strategies and goals; and to stimulate national and international cooperation in coping with common problems.

Mr. Holcombe noted the enormous progress which China has achieved with its social development programmes since 1949, particularly since 1978: notably its education-for-all and health-for-all efforts; reduction in the numbers of its absolute poor from 270 million in 1978 to 97 million in 1985 and to 80 million

today; and in the area of population control. However, there is still the continued need to improve social welfare during the transition to a socialist market economy.

Mr. Holcombe pointed out that China was the first country to honour its commitment made at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to prepare a comprehensive national Agenda 21 strategy for sustainable development. In March of 1994, the State Council of China approved its "China Agenda 21 White Paper on Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century". This reflects China's commitment to sustainable development and its pursuit of a balanced strategy for economic and social development.

Finally, the important role of the State Planning Commission in taking the lead at the State Council level with the preparations of the Social Summit must be recognized. The objective is to ensure that China's social development policies and programmes are sustainable, successfully incorporated into development planning, and that implementation occurs at all levels of government and society.

Statement by Mr. Jacques Baudot, Coordinator, World Summit for Social Development

Mr. Baudot recalled the goals of the United Nations Charter which states in its preamble that the peoples of the United Nations are determined "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" and "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples". The Social Summit, with the efforts of all concerned, will be a contribution to this universal goal of economic and social advancement of all peoples.

The Summit will address the problems of poverty, unemployment, lack of social integration or cohesion or social harmony, which have many causes, characteristics and consequences - economic, social, political, cultural and even moral and philosophical - and affect all societies and all nations, in different ways and with a varying intensity. These problems should also be addressed with a sense of urgency, care and responsibility. This Summit is not an ordinary world conference; it should be seen as a step towards the identification of values, ideas and policies that could help define and implement the common good and the common features of the civilizations of the twenty-first century.

Nobody has all the answers to all the problems to our societies and there is no blueprint for a solution to the problems of poverty, unemployment or social disintegration. Through the process of the preparation of the Summit, governments, as well as the other actors - including the private sector - are invited to share views and experiences, to learn from each other and to devise ideas and policies which will both respect the principles and values on which the United Nations is founded and respect national and community orientations, priorities, traditions and cultures. A good division of responsibilities and roles, between the State (including central and local public authorities) and private initiatives (including market forces and mechanisms), would be one of

the domains for this exchange of experiences and learning through mutual respect and openness.

Mr. Baudot remarked that the Summit will proclaim the critical importance of cooperation at all levels including at the international level. The role of the United Nations and of the United Nations system is only part of the overall international cooperation required for addressing problems of social progress and overall development. It should be a supportive role. International organizations are at the service of Member States and their citizens.

Finally, Mr. Baudot noted that the Government of China has been playing a very active and essential role in the preparation of the Summit, through inter alia, the meetings of the Preparatory Committee. He further noted that this active role is rooted in the important work being done at the national level. The organization of this Symposium, and the most generous hospitality provided by the host Government, testified of this interest and contributions of China to the cause of social development.

Appendix II

List of participants

Experts

Bina Agarwal

Rogatien Biaou

Jenny Chadwick

Chen Ji-yuan

Chen San-lin

Elisabeth Goan Croll

Meghnad Jagdishchandra Desai

Fu Xu-shan

Gan Shi-jun

Gou Jian-mo

Guo Cheng-kang

Keith Griffin

S. Athar Hussain

Jiang Li

Jiang de-hua

Jiang Guang-ping

Jiang Jin-he

Kay Y. K. Ku

Jassy B. Kwesiga

Li Qiang

Kiari Liman-Tinguiri

Liu Fu-he

Luo Rong-Qu

Ma Rong

Meng Xian-zhong

Pan Wen-can

J. N. M. Richelle

Carl Riskin

E. L. Samuels

Wang Si-bin

Wang Xin-huai

Wu Huan-guang

Wu Wei

Wu Jun

Yang Yu-ying

Ye Ru-qiu

Zheng Hang Sheng

Zheng Xin-li

Zhu Chuan-yi

Zhu Qing-fang

Zhu Wen

United Nations system

Jacques Baudot (United Nations Secretariat)

Vinay K. Bhargava (World Bank)

Pieter Bottelier (World Bank)

Romulo V. Garcia (UNDP)

Dharam Ghai (UNRISD)

He Jin (UNDP)

Arthur N. Holcombe (UNDP)

Gloria Kan (United Nations Secretariat)

Amy C. Munthe-Kaas (UNICEF)

Fainula Kurji-Rodriguez (UNDP)

Ajmal M. Qureshi (FAO)

A. Twigger (ILO)

Felicidad Lema Villareal (FAO)

Host Government

Li Lanqing (Vice-Premier)

Chen Jinhua (State Planning Commission)

Hao Jianxiu (State Planning Commission)

Wang Guangya (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Yang Qingwei (State Planning Commission, Department of Social Development)

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STATE OF PREPARATION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: SYMPOSIA, SEMINARS AND WORKING GROUPS

Seminar on the Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Social Progress

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, in its decision 2/2 adopted at its second session, took note of the activities carried out by the Secretariat in the context of the preparation of the Summit and encouraged all the organizations concerned to pursue their initiatives, including through symposia, seminars and working groups.

2. The Seminar on the Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Social Progress was organized by the secretariat of the Social Summit. Financed by voluntary contributions from the Governments of Austria, France and Switzerland, the Seminar was hosted by the Government of Slovenia. It was held in Bled from 28 to 30 October 1994. The Secretary-General expresses his gratitude to the Governments concerned. The report on the Seminar, prepared by the Secretariat, is contained in the annex to this note.

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Annex

Seminar on the Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Social Progress

Bled, Slovenia, 28-30 October 1994

I. Background and intentions

1. The Seminar was organized in the context of the preparation of the World Summit for Social Development, or Social Summit, which will be held in Copenhagen in March 1995. Pursuant to a decision taken by the United Nations General Assembly, this Summit is to consider three main themes: poverty, employment and social integration. A draft Declaration and draft Programme of Action will be submitted to the heads of State and Government meeting in Copenhagen.

2. The idea of a seminar on the ethical and spiritual dimensions of social progress arose informally during the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Social Summit held in New York in February 1994. The main document submitted to the Committee noted that the dominant model of development raises questions and concerns and that, where rights are no longer balanced by obligations and guided by responsibilities, where the search for individual satisfaction is promoted as an end in itself and where the pursuit of personal or group identity takes place at the expense of others, there is a moral crisis at the individual level and an ethical crisis at the societal level. Some delegations referred to the need for an international code of ethics to mould relations between individuals, groups and nations and to limit the various forms of corruption and violence. Others stressed that development, whether of individuals or societies, has spiritual dimensions as well as material and political ones. Some non-governmental organizations stated that they were working for a Social Summit centred on the values of compassion and solidarity with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

3. One way of responding to these concerns and demands for enrichment of the discourse on the Social Summit was to organize a discussion of the philosophy which underlies or should motivate the efforts of the international community to alleviate poverty, create jobs and promote social integration or cohesion. Financed by contributions from the Governments of Austria, France and Switzerland and hosted by the Government of Slovenia, this Seminar in Bled had as its objective to: clarify the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the Summit's three central themes; identify the moral values common to all cultures and religions which could constitute the basis of social progress and the core of the message which the Copenhagen Summit could provide to the world; pave the way for a more holistic perception of international cooperation on social issues; and encourage, now and in the future and at all levels, exchanges and debates concerning the concepts and values which enable societies to function.

4. For this Seminar and this report, the "ethical" relates to the formation and articulation of moral precepts and rules of conduct. Ethics and moral philosophy at the individual level and ethics and political philosophy at the

societal level are regarded as synonyms. The "spiritual" is that which belongs to the realm of the spirit, that which is spirit, that which emanates from a higher principle, divine or, in any case, immaterial and all-encompassing. The ethical and the spiritual are regarded as complementary, in fact, indivisible. An ethic which is not motivated by the spirit, by an enriching and all-encompassing principle - for example, Reason, Love, Harmony or Perfection - is merely a legal code. A spirituality which is not embodied in an ethic is purely abstract. The choice of these two concepts, the ethical and the spiritual, for the title of this Seminar rests on the notion that the cancer which seems to be gnawing at many societies must be analysed and defeated at the level of values and works of the spirit, and that culture and moral standards - and, of course, morality - must be shaped by philosophical reflection.

5. Invited in their personal capacity, the 35 people who met in Bled had four items on their agenda:

- The spirit of the time and the objectives of the Social Summit;
- Human dignity as the central value for political action;
- Self-interest and the common good; and
- Enriching the discourse which proposes solutions to the three central themes of the Social Summit.

Prior to summarizing the ideas put forth during the Seminar under these four headings, it is useful to indicate the working assumptions which the participants agreed to accept, with nuances.

II. Working assumptions

6. Societies, our world and its evolution are shaped and guided by ideas and values.

This initial working assumption is philosophically opposed to all forms of determinism, ancient and modern. Neither Providence nor technology decides our future. Chance, the weight of previous decisions, as well as and especially today's decisions, anchored in perceptions, emotions and cultures, drive and shape human history. The goods and techniques which tend to dominate contemporary cultures are products of the human genius. Mankind has choices and the Social Summit offers an opportunity to discuss some of these choices.

7. The spiritual is an integral part of reality and there is continuity between the material and the spiritual for both individuals and society.

In addition to differing from a dualist philosophy, this second working assumption suggests that the things which encumber our world are neither good nor bad in themselves, but that they acquire meaning and value from the spirit which mankind invests in their creation and use. The same can be said for social institutions and forms of political organization. This presence of the spirit also means that compassion, altruism, generosity and whatever is

universally, if tentatively, recognized as partaking of human goodness have the power to move societies in positive directions. This is an assumption which has always been central to religions and has often been expressed in the literary works of most cultures. Conversely, fear, despair, selfishness, arrogance and the will to dominate others lead to violence, alienation and the decline of human communities and civilizations.

8. Social progress requires the combined efforts of all actors, from individuals to the State and international organizations.

The power to influence the course of human affairs and the organization of societies is not - and never has been completely - in the hands of governments and public authorities. It is shared by other institutions, such as the family, various associations, enterprises and the media. Nowadays regional and international institutions, public and private, also play a growing role. Individuals themselves, through both their participation in the adoption and implementation of decisions which concern the community and the way in which they perceive and experience their human condition, improve or damage the social fabric. The development or regression of societies is the concern of all. Nevertheless, those institutions and individuals who have the intellectual and political power to influence the course of history have special responsibilities and obligations.

9. Social progress or regression is always possible, and there is no perfectly harmonious and perfectly stable human society.

The attempts made, especially during this twentieth century, to create societies and forms of organization of power intended to meet all human needs have been reflected in oppression and terror and have culminated in tragic errors. Doctrines and practices based on the supremacy and superiority of one race or nation have entailed indescribable suffering and have contaminated minds. Noble utopias of solidarity and fraternity have been appropriated by lawless dictators. Moreover, the assaults on the environment, weapons of mass destruction and some scientific developments which pave the way for experimentation on the human body have created a vague but pernicious culture of insecurity and uncertainty as to the survival of humanity. At the same time, to preserve everything out of fear of the future is clearly neither desirable nor feasible. Change is a basic characteristic of individuals and institutions. Individuals and societies alike need aspirations, ideals and dreams. The Copenhagen Summit is being held at a time in history when utopias arouse legitimate distrust, when the notion of a single, planned model of development or social progress has lost credibility and legitimacy and when, just as strongly, humanity needs to control and guide its destiny.

10. At the end of this twentieth century, there is a dominant perception of the characteristics of individual success and happiness and of what constitutes a good society.

Apart from issues of distribution of military, political and economic power in the contemporary world, this final working assumption rests on the well-worn observation that the great shifts and amalgamations of this era, combined with the massive and unprecedented material successes of Western civilization, have

created some elements of a universal culture centred on the acquisition of goods and services which render daily life easier and more comfortable, as well as on the notions of free choice and instant satisfaction of needs. With many nuances in different national communities and different social groups, there is now indeed a common culture based on the search for material well-being, the consumption of goods, images and information, and the pursuit of both self-interest and national interests. The values of efficiency and competition are also prominent in this way of thinking, which is often perceived as a "model", in the normative sense, and which dominates contemporary societies.

III. The spirit of the time and the objectives of the Social Summit

11. The rationale for the Social Summit is that there are persistent problems of underdevelopment and poverty which affect a majority of mankind and that problems - new or stated in new terms - are emerging in the areas of employment, social exclusion and disintegration of the social fabric. The latter problems have not bypassed those regions of the world which enjoy a high material standard of living. The specific objectives of the Summit involve ideas and policies which should make it possible to recover hope in the possibility of progress for humanity. The spirit of the time is a whole, vague in its outlines but often precise in its components, which represents a kind of average opinion of the average citizen of a country typical of contemporary civilization. Made up of ideas and convictions, prejudices and impressions, judgements and information, the spirit of the time naturally reflects the dominant culture, as well as the assessments made of that culture. Apart from exceptional cases belonging to the realm of artistic or scientific creation, the spirit of the time strongly permeates individual and collective decisions. While malleable, it constitutes a kind of ideology which penetrates minds and behaviour. New ideas and innovative policies are those which modify the spirit of the time.

12. Some features of the spirit of the time are obstacles to social progress. Three are mentioned here: the cult of money, the cult of performance and the cult of instant satisfaction. Other feature of the spirit of the time, such as the emphasis on individual freedom and freedom of enterprise, and the demand for participation, information and democracy, facilitate social progress.

13. The cult of money threatens mankind and its future.

Money is at the heart and core of the dominant culture and is the main driving force of contemporary societies. It is coveted because it permits higher levels of consumption and acquisition, because it is a source of power and prestige. It has invaded domains in which it did not previously control behaviours and dreams. In industrialized societies, there are very few human and institutional relationships left which are not dominated by money. At least two manifestations of this monetary imperialism directly threaten the future of modern societies.

(i) The first of these threats is the invasion of science by money.

Science and the scientific culture require exchange, verification, transparency and generosity. The scientist strives to discover and to innovate in order to extend the limits of knowledge. In a religious and spiritual sense, he participates in the work of creation. This work cannot be controlled, cannot be the object of speculation and profit. Science and its fruits cannot be owned without being perverted. When political power or financial power take hold of science and scientists, the scientific spirit vanishes as it is put to the service of power and money. Then science and technologies become dangerous for mankind. This is true today of the immense possibilities for profit - particularly through the sale of medicines - that lie in the commercialization of advances in fields such as biology or genetics. Discoveries are prompted by the desire for gain and are exploited financially instead of being shared with the scientific community before they enter the common heritage of mankind. There is a veritable gold rush for scientific patents. The relationship between science and its technological applications is perverted by money. This phenomenon is all the more serious in that modern science now has enormous power to influence life and death, and the way in which human beings perceive their identity and the universe around them. The results of scientific activity cannot, without enormous dangers for everyone, be motivated by profit and become the property of one individual, group or nation.

(ii) The second, more diffuse, threat is corruption, by money, of social institutions and relations.

The worship of money - which is one of the many forms of worship ravaging the modern world - lies at the basis of the many forms of corruption which seem to afflict most societies. There is corruption when private or public enterprises obtain contracts for work needed by the community through payments or other favours granted to employees or elected officials. There is corruption when services which are in short supply are distributed on the basis of criteria which are neither objective nor transparent; when access - to a school, a hospital or any public service - is secured through pressure or influence; when the investor cannot gain access to a market or a territory without payments and gifts to various public or intermediary authorities; when the rich and powerful avoid taxation or other forms of solidarity and collective responsibility. There is also corruption of the entire social fabric when the strong impose their will on the weak by enticing them with rewards, or when those who have the power to impart information do so not because that is what their sense of responsibility and conscience dictates, but because it will benefit them or their companies. The various manifestations of corruption in the modern world, which increasingly are appearing in organized forms at the level of nations or of the world, are a cancer in our societies. It affects those who corrupt, those who are corrupted and society as a whole. When political power or a public service is corrupted, it loses its legitimacy and violence follows. When private institutions and citizens themselves believe that corruption - whether spectacular or mundane - is part of social life and is, in fact, "normal" or "inevitable", society and civilization are in mortal danger. An ethic that distinguishes between true and false, good and bad, and a culture that ensures the predominance of what is true and good in ideas and behaviours is essential, not only for social progress, but also for a community's survival.

14. The cult of performance is incompatible with social harmony.

The production of goods, carried out to support life and continue creation, and also trade, a source of enrichment for human beings, call for initiative and concern for competence. The desire to "excel", that is, to go beyond the physical, intellectual and moral limits that common sense would seem to dictate, lies at the basis of human endeavour, from sports feats to the spiritual quest. However, concern about doing well economically can lead to worship of growth and economic performance, while the desire to go beyond one's limits can lead to extreme forms of competition and rejection of the weak. Moreover, an awareness of the purpose of the quest to improve performance is clearly essential in order to make a positive or negative assessment of its results. The dominant culture strongly favours individual and collective performance. Competition, economic and social, is often seen as a value in itself. It has been said that post-Renaissance western culture has created an aggressive and promethean human type. Certain forms of social Darwinism and environmental destruction are linked to this aggressiveness and to the cult of performance.

(i) Social Darwinism leads to contempt for, and exclusion of, most of mankind.

"Social Darwinism" exists when a philosophy of linear evolution and "natural" selection through the capacity to adapt to the environment and history is applied to societies, groups and individuals. Those who cannot keep up with development or "progress", who cannot "adapt" or "adjust" their modes of action and thought to the dominant norm, to the prevailing criteria of what constitutes an acceptable performance, are doomed to disappear. "Overtaken" by rapid and relentless evolution, they must, at worst, be eliminated - as in the case of certain professions - or, at best, be protected - as in the case of the unemployed in industrialized societies - and at all events forgotten as far as possible. Most of the philosophical assumptions underlying the concepts and ideologies of development draw from this social Darwinism, which itself was, in part, a legacy of the scientistic doctrines of the end of the nineteenth century in Europe. Along with high priority accorded to economic growth, this culture of performance, efficiency and adaptation marginalizes an increasing number of individuals, social groups and national communities. This culture, which also has egalitarian and democratic roots, does not aim to exclude. On the contrary, the objectives that are loudly and earnestly proclaimed are equality of opportunity, participation and social integration. The problem, and the crack into which all the weak and excluded fall, is that the logic of competition draws societies into an endless spiral. The "rules of the game", presented and experienced as requirements of competition, are constantly scaled up, and neither universal education, ongoing training nor technical assistance can enable everyone to adapt and be integrated. By definition, competition implies that there will be winners and losers. Indeed, the greater the demands made on individuals or groups - in terms of technical knowledge and above all in terms of psychological and cultural mobility - the greater the risk that only a minority will be able to "perform".

(ii) Economic performance, as defined today, is an obstacle to environmental protection.

Human beings are not only social, but also part of their physical environment, which is both natural and man-made. The same Promethean philosophy, deriving from a concept of Man as master of the universe, has resulted in extensive damage to the planet and destruction of its wealth. In addition to the dangers which this situation presents for the survival of mankind, it demonstrates a lack of respect for the environment which is related to the various forms of violence afflicting contemporary societies. Moreover, a culture which destroys in order to build itself up is also a culture of the precarious and the insignificant. Very few adults alive today can recognize the places in which they spent their childhood. The pace of change is exhilarating and a source of anguish. If societies are to be more harmonious, there must be more peaceful and caring relationships between mankind and the universe. There is a secular humanism in existence which damages the individual's relationship with himself, nature and the divine.

15. The cult of instant satisfaction impedes the search for a common and shared future.

(i) The dominant culture is one of impatience.

The way individuals behave suggests that there is a great hunger for gratification of all kinds which can be neither delayed nor denied. Fear of frustration, the use of this concept as justification for satisfying every need and fancy, reveals a hedonism which is perhaps the most salient characteristic of industrial civilizations based on mass production and built-in obsolescence. Detachment is not considered a virtue and renunciation is regarded with suspicion, as denoting a lack of interest in life. This culture of total and instantaneous participation has no place for patience, prudence and the future. The desire to hand down possessions and modes of thought and conduct to the younger and future generations is considerably weakened by concentration on the present and fear of the future. A sense of the transitory nature of all things imbues the modern soul.

(ii) Goals and their rapid achievement are considered more important than the process itself.

Policies, declarations, strategies and social development plans, at both the national and international levels, place great emphasis on the formulation of goals, if possible quantitative and sometimes within specific time-frames. This trend, which no doubt began in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and reached a peak with the five-year and annual plans of centrally planned and more or less authoritarian economies, seeks to mobilize resources, energy and sometimes imagination in support of goals which are easily understood by everyone. The drawback is that because of this emphasis on goals, which are presented as achievable and as a source of well-being for all, political processes, institutions and how they operate and the social and individual behaviours, which in fact constitute the essence and the reality of social development, tend to remain in the background. When combined with the prevailing culture and political calculation, the cult of performance and the

cult of instant satisfaction make it difficult to sustain the constant and patient efforts that are needed for development and social progress. Self-indulgence destroys individual balance and social harmony.

(iii) In difficult and crisis situations, the most effective policies and investments are often sacrificed.

History provides us with examples of bold though initially costly social reforms which were implemented during periods of crisis and shortage. This was done in a number of regions after the Second World War. Today, some societies which are incomparable political and economic circumstances prefer to attend to priorities - as perceived by the political authorities and opinion polls - at the expense of such fields as education and scientific research, which are vital to the future. When all seems lost or in jeopardy, it is the universities which must be preserved and encouraged. And yet the short-term "now" culture, the culture of instant gratification - often the product of fear - proposes more attractive policies which are actually harmful.

16. The spirit of the time is also characterized by an emphasis on individual freedom and free enterprise, which are sources of social progress.

(i) Standards of living rise when the greatest number of individuals are engaged in enterprise and innovation.

The emphasis which the dominant culture places on individual freedom to promote production and trade has been and continues to be the main engine of social change and modernization. Since the age of the Enlightenment, modernization has been conceived as resting on the market economy, political democracy and individualism. It has resulted in spectacular transformations of material living conditions in all parts of the world. With increasingly efficient and rapid tools and means of information, needs are multiplying and it is becoming possible to satisfy them.

(ii) The various aspects of freedom must progress in harmony.

Free enterprise goes hand in hand with political freedom. Economic freedom cannot be complete without freedom of thought and the freedom to criticize. The freedom to criticize is purely individual outside the context of freedom of movement, exchange and association. The constantly changing balance between the various spaces of freedom calls for clear and acknowledged laws and a shared culture. Laws and regulations are necessary, not only because human beings are imperfect but also because life in society requires that there be rules of the game and an arbitrator. A common culture is also necessary in order to ensure that the exercise of multiple individual freedoms does not lead to the fragmentation of society. Today in certain parts of the world where political and social structures have been radically transformed, the lack of harmonious progression between freedoms, laws and culture is leading to corruption, criminality, violence and the risk of social disintegration.

(iii) Fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights represent a basic achievement of humanity.

The twentieth century has been marked - and continues to be marked every day - by inconceivable acts of barbarism. Humanity as a whole is harmed and humiliated when an individual's basic rights to life and physical and moral integrity are violated. Humanity is in danger of extinction when attacks on the rights of the human person are considered "tolerable", "normal" or "inevitable". When absolute evil becomes commonplace and is accepted out of cowardice or stupidity, civilization disintegrates. In the face of such barbarism and such indifference, a philosophy of human rights and a body of legal instruments have been elaborated. This philosophy, based on freedom and human dignity, is the main bastion against the abuse of power in all its forms.

(iv) Individual freedom is meaningless and is dangerous when not rooted in an ethic and enlightened by the spirit.

Most religions and some moral philosophies have traditionally subscribed to the hypothesis that every person who is sound of mind has an inner voice - or conscience, or reason - that enables him to distinguish unequivocally between good and evil and, in moral terms, between true and false. This inner voice was viewed as independent of the laws of the State and independent of external pressures. Exercising freedom meant obeying the dictates of one's conscience - or not obeying them. In fact, in certain religions and metaphysics, a person attains true freedom only if be obeys his conscience. Nihilism and certain forms of existentialism in the twentieth century have plucked freedom from its roots and severed its fundamental ties with responsibility and love of others. Alienated, individual freedom could bring about the destruction of civilizations. The need for a new ethic and spirituality drawn from the well-springs of all the great religions and philosophies arises, in particular, from the need to restore this link between freedom and responsibility.

17. The demand for participation, information and democracy is a positive aspect of the spirit of the time.

For a great many reasons, including access to education, the betterment of standards of living, the dissemination of information on the successes of certain societies and the failures of other societies, the dominant culture of our time insists on the participation of individuals and groups in the life of the society. Such participation remains difficult, at times stifled and often superficial, but it is clear that civil society has become a vital actor on the social stage. Here, the spirit of the time and the goals of the Copenhagen Summit are in harmony. This is particulary true as regards the elimination of all legal and cultural obstacles to equality between women and men. In order for the participation of citizens in the functioning of societies to acquire its full meaning and realize its full potential, certain conditions must obviously be met. The content, motives and manifestations of power must be reassessed. Extending power to all in its perverse and selfish forms will merely aggravate the problems of our societies. Participation and democracy imply respect for oneself and for others, a sense of responsibility and moderation in judgement and action.

IV. Human dignity as the central value for political action

18. What is human dignity? In terms of moral philosophy, human dignity requires an ennoblement of the soul, an opportunity to give affection and show deference, a sense of self-worth and of the value of others, and a sense of the value of every task to be performed in the human community, such value being measured not in pecuniary terms but rather in the satisfaction derived from having contributed to universal harmony. Human dignity can be defined as the fundamental goodness inherent in every human being; the very nature of the human being as created by God; the central and inevitable core of the person; an inalienable right given to all by the mere fact of existing; the source of life itself; the origin of self-respect and respect for others; and the very essence of the relationship between the being, nature and the divine. The common denominator among all these different concepts of human dignity is that they view it as the most essential and most basic quality of the human being.

Moreover:

(i) Human dignity is indivisible; it must necessarily be recognized in all, without distinction of any kind;

(ii) Human dignity is inalienable; no external force, no circumstance of life can strip a person of his dignity; only the individual himself can mistreat or surrender it;

(iii) Political action, the exercise of power, the implementation of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and communities all have as their ultimate objective the safeguarding of human dignity.

19. Human dignity, poverty, unemployment and alienation.

(i) There is no direct relationship between the material standard and conditions of living and human dignity; neither poverty nor material well-being nor affluence is incompatible with human dignity.

Until very recently, in certain cultures, those who were weak, useless or maladjusted were considered to deserve most attention. Those who had no place in society held the most important place in people's hearts and spirits. Today, the capitalist ethic is in conflict with traditional values. It tends to establish a link of causality between economic success and self-respect. Economic failure translates into a loss of personal dignity, and even of "national dignity". Poverty eradication and social and economic policies for standards of living must be based on a recognition of the human dignity of the poor, the weak and the humble. At the same time, the eradication of material and spiritual poverty is a duty. Poverty and deprivation are created by societies; they are not inevitable. The fact that there is no relationship between poverty and human dignity must in no way be used as a pretext for not improving living conditions.

(ii) Neither the unemployed nor those who lack job security should be deprived of their personal dignity.

A frightening trait of many cultures - ancient and modern - is that of associating different levels of dignity with a hierarchy of professions and activities. At the bottom of the totem-pole are, of course, adults who have never worked or have lost their jobs and cannot provide for their families. The "job" - not what he is or does - determines the individual's identity. One must have great courage and inner resources in order to resist the social and cultural pressure which strips the individual of his dignity when he is no longer "productive". At the international level, the dominant culture also tends to strip social groups and nations of their dignity when they do not contribute or no longer contribute to the growth and prosperity of the world economy. As with poverty eradication, the fight against unemployment and underemployment must begin with recognition of the dignity and value of all human labour, even if it is humble, insecure, "unprofitable" or unremmuerated.

(iii) Alienation or separation of the human being from his social milieu is all the more frequent as the paths to freedom and dignity grow narrower.

Integration or cohesion or social harmony is the capacity of human beings to live together in mutual respect, from the village community to the entire planet. The first prerequisite of this social harmony - very far from being a reality today and, in any case, ever fragile and in need of careful nurturing and cultivation - is recognition of the dignity of others. Racism and the insidious conviction that a given person, community or nation is marginal and will remain so are sources of alienation. Inequalities, when perceived and experienced as manifestations of a person's inferiority, are also sources of alienation, and there are many of these in today's world, where wealth is defined purely in material terms and where the gaps between "affluent" and "poor" are constantly increasing. Absolute poverty, defined as material deprivation, isolation, lack of hope and ultimately alienation, did not exist in communities and societies where charity and mutual assistance provided support and feeling of belonging. On the contrary, the societies of the contemporary world are characterized by isolation, marginalization and, hence, resentment, violence and crime. Another condition of social harmony is respect for diversity, or the recognition of a common humanity beyond differences in appearance and in culture. A calm and joyful celebration of human diversity, which is completely different from reticent and grudging acceptance of the relativism of opinions and customs, requires a spiritual foundation and shared values. In order to cease being predatory and become open to such a celebration of diversity, the dominant culture must become less predatory, less impatient and more spiritual. At both the individual level and the level of relations between States, humiliation injures dignity and self-respect. Humiliation also breeds violence and social disintegration.

20. Human dignity and respect for human rights.

Human rights, meaning the philosophy stemming from the Enlightenment, the product of many efforts throughout human history to limit the abuse of power and define relations between individuals and social institutions, the political

movement emphasizing the protection and promotion of individual rights, and the body of legal instruments which, particularly at the international level, defines a vast array of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, constitutes an essential element of the modern conscience. To reject, ignore or disparage human rights because they are part of a dominant culture that also contains aspects that are not conducive to social harmony would amount to promoting barbarism; to neglect those rights on the grounds that they are violated daily would amount to legitimizing it. The greatest danger to present and future civilizations would be for the human rights philosophy and instruments to be referred to ritually and gradually lose their political content. This philosophy and these instruments are based on the concept of human dignity. Thus it would be absurd and criminal to attempt to oppose a philosophy of human dignity with a philosophy of promotion of human rights. The complementarity between the two concepts can be summed up by several precepts:

(i) Human dignity is an absolute and a categorical imperative; it arises from ontology and spirituality; it should pervade minds, cultures and policies as air pervades our planet;

(ii) Human rights, which have more to do with ethics, law and politics, and whose respect can be verified and measured, constitute the preferred means of putting into practice the concept of human dignity;

(iii) Individual rights and responsibility for oneself, the other and the planet are indissociable; respect for rights and the exercise of responsibility are evidence of human dignity.

21. Human dignity and education.

The intellectual and spiritual renewal now in its infancy in various places in the world requires education to take a central role. Education is the key that allows a child to discover his intrinsic dignity. In order to play that role to the fullest, education - its systems, precepts and practices - should be based on very specific and demanding values. When knowledge about the ability to learn, the importance of moral precepts and rules of behaviour is transmitted with the respect and love which a person awakening to the world deserves, a child discovers or recovers the joy in living and growing surrounded by others and adults. The values transmitted through education are just as essential as, and inseparable from, the knowledge that is transmitted. The prevailing culture and spiritual atmosphere in educational institutions affect to a considerable degree the quality of the service rendered to the human community. The same is true of families, schools and universities, and the media. If, as some people believe, attacks on human dignity are increasingly frequent now, at the end of the twentieth century, these institutions are partly to blame. As for the media, freedom and independence of judgment should be informed and shaped by idealism and an ethic of honesty, kindness and respect for the human beings who "consume" information products with trust, interest and often eagerness. Like schools and families, the media have enormous duties and obligations with regard to respect for human dignity. The diversity of views and opinions which must be reflected in the press and television programmes is an essential contribution to the moral and intellectual enrichment of individuals.

22. Human dignity and quality of public services.

One of the ways in which political leaders and civil servants and agents who serve the public can promote human dignity is to take great care to establish healthy relations with their fellow citizens. Besides honesty and professional competence, a service ethic is essential. Whatever his social status and degree of vulnerability, a citizen should be considered a human being, and the need for a service, whatever it may be, does not make him dependent. Civility in human relations also arises from ethics and spirituality.

V. Self-interest and common good

23. It would seem that the cult of money, performance, and instant gratification mentioned above as characteristics of the spirit of the times that work against progress and social harmony also work against the quest for the common good, unless the latter is considered the automatic and morally neutral result of the forces at work at this moment in human history. But the common good cannot be morally neutral. It is neither the result of commercial transactions, nor the product of political strategies and balances, nor the cultural or moral trends of the moment, nor, precisely, the spirit of the times. It should be the fruit of deliberate efforts in all areas of human activity, whether economics, politics, culture, science, ethics or spirituality. The common good is both a state, which is always being renewed and transformed, and an aspiration. It is a practical necessity, in an era when humanity is "one" in its means of exchange and communications and is also "one" because it has the ability to destroy itself. It is a moral obligation, if one realizes that turning inward, towards one's community, nation or region, has no ethical justification or practical value. Today, the common good should be experienced and sought at the level of the most individual relationships and at the level of the future of all humanity.

24. In an era marked by interdependence and also by a certain fragmentation of human communities, what are the elements of the common good? Poverty reduction? A job for all who desire one? The elimination of all forms of discrimination, prejudice and the various forms of rejection of the other that mar humanity? Undoubtedly, and also peace, security and the reduction of the many threats that loom over the world at the end of the twentieth century. And finally, more joy and harmony, and an abundance of knowledge and spirit.

25. Individual interest, or self-interest is apparently easier to define, and also apparently easier to satisfy. If we look at the superficial common meaning, it means all that an individual hopes to be and to obtain and all that he wishes to have or invest for instant or deferred gratification. In fact, in no culture is self-interest considered totally selfish and limitless. There are objective curbs, such as the interests of close family, the limits imposed by ability, time and energy, and the need to allow for the fact that other individuals and groups are also free to pursue their own interests. There are also cultural and ethical curbs. Expressions such as "enlightened self-interest" suggest that calculation, reason or morality leads individuals - or groups and nations - to conceive and experience their interests with more

complexity than instinct might dictate. If this is indeed true, entering an indictment against a dominant culture that seemed overly concerned with pursuing individual interests to the point of forgetting the very concept of the common good would be a useful criticism, but somewhat inadequate. It would be more productive to show that the only way to reconcile personal interest and the common good is to give to the former a content and orientation that would transform it into a contribution to the latter. It is selfishness, egotism and egocentrism, rather than individualism, that are destructive. It is not the quest for more power or greater profits that is bad for the individual and society, but the motives for that quest, if they are dominated by vanity, the hunger for power or the desire to profit at the expense of others. It is not the desire to develop, improve and expand one's being, talents and abilities that can be seen as anti-social. On the contrary, and in contrast to narcissism, true individual progress is indivisibly connected to relationships with the other - the family, the community and all humanity - and with nature, the universe and the spiritual or divine whole. Individualism is an empty vessel that can be filled by good or evil. While the general interest can be simply the sum of selfish or short-term interests, the common good, by definition, has a normative content, and can only be the sum, plus "value added", of "enlightened self-interest" guided by common virtues, values and spirituality. Today, these spiritual virtues, values and demands should be drawn from all the religions and philosophies that have enriched humanity. This is not a middle-of-the-road or reductionist approach, nor a vague syncretism, but the quest for a common humanity.

26. A very important example for our times of the relationship between individual interests and the common good can be found in the world of economics and business. Major efforts are being made to promote social responsibility among companies and to introduce ethical dimensions in their strategies and policies. Aside from the question of honesty in financial dealings and product quality, a "company ethic" has various aspects and "targets". It may involve an ethic relating to the physical environment (pollution issues, working conditions, employee safety, for example), the buyers of its products (issues involving the physical or mental health of consumers), or even elements of the national or international community, for example the choice of an investment site or the decision to create or eliminate jobs in one region or another. These decisions and choices at various levels are not necessarily complementary and not automatically compatible. The dictates of ethics should be illuminated by a general philosophy of responsibility and the common good. Experience also supports moral principles in suggesting that the business ethic, in order to be lasting, must be implemented fully and consistently. Moreover, there is no simple and consistently positive relationship between the quality of the ethic and capacity for innovation; the latter disturbs structures, habits and ways of thinking. Virtue and change must constantly be reconciled, and change involves risk, including for the "established ethic". The same is true for societies as a whole. Virtue is often associated in people's minds with stability and conservatism. However, the spiritual leaders of all religions and philosophies have conceived and experienced their quest for perfection as an exhilarating and dangerous adventure. In the end, observations of the role of ethics in the life of companies show that there is no contradiction - indeed, there is often a positive relationship - between success in the conventional sense of profits and return on investment and success in terms of ethical requirements. The

entrepreneur who makes morally good decisions may do so based on principles and values that he has internalized and which inform his actions. He may be guided by the "enlightened self-interest" of his company. Again, the point is that there is not necessarily a contradiction between individual interests defined intelligently and morally and the common good. Honesty may be practised either out of virtue or because it is the best policy. It is possible to argue that there is a "social Darwinism": that the societies which observe such ethical principles as tolerance and solidarity are best able to survive.

27. All the major religions and philosophies have prescribed some form of balance between individual and collective interests. For example, the five elements constituting fundamental rights in Islam - the right to life, the right to property, the right to faith, the right to honour and the right to the authority of reason - must be carried out both individually and collectively. Thus, the tax by which the rich must help the poor is a religious duty towards the community before it is an individual act. Since it is channelled through the collective the recipient cannot feel humiliated.

28. In learning to become fully human, the individual finds both his personal identity and his place in the human community. This is a process, a difficult apprenticeship involving the heart and mind. The identity of the person, the self, is crucial, because it is there that selfishness must be defeated in order to make way for dignity and self-esteem. The family, which must also conquer its selfishness and power relationships, provides the environment for the human being to grow in goodness and love. The community is also essential for the full realization of the person because it teaches respect for the other. Individuals become fully human when they embody the spirit that defines humanity.

29. The key to the future lies in the search for human dignity and the common good. A new vision is necessary, which should focus once again on social action. The triumph of the self opens the way to dictatorship. There is also a need to draw up a new pedagogic conception of political action which would enable politicians to lead their citizens towards greater fulfilment. Political action requires the highest intellectual and moral integrity. This implies new standards for the evaluation of political action based on the verdict of men and history. All that degrades man is hateful.

30. This question of the relationship between the individual and the community, and between the interests of the individual - or of the group, class or nation - and the common good, is fundamental for societies to function and for the future of mankind. Once again, some thoughts in the form of precepts can no doubt be developed further.

(i) Individual interest, if selfishly and blindly pursued, is destructive for society and for the individual himself; all wealth implies social responsibility; the accumulation of wealth at the expense of others destroys the universal harmony;

(ii) Only individual improvement, guided by culture and spirituality, can make social progress possible;

(iii) The common good is not a lowest common denominator; on the contrary, mediocrity threatens contemporary societies; and the search for the common good must be guided by exceptional courage, virtue, intelligence and ability;

(iv) When the search for human dignity directs thought and action, there is a continuity, indeed an identity, between the individual interest and the common good.

VI. Enriching the discourse in the search for solutions to the three central themes of the Social Summit

31. A first requirement is at the level of language. Words and expressions which depersonalize relations between individuals and society and which, although unintentionally, are contrary to the concept of human dignity, should be avoided. This category includes expressions such as productive or non-productive persons or activities, human capital, human resources and the labour market. These expressions, and many others, have a technical meaning and are part of the logic of economics, but this logic becomes political and damaging when it enters the common language.

32. A second requirement relates to the tone of the discourse, and hence its philosophical assumptions. Especially when the objective is to bring back ethical and spiritual dimensions in political discourse, moderation is of the utmost importance. Emphasis is dangerous, even when the aim is to describe problems of the future. It is often preferable not to talk of "solutions" - as in the title of this item of the seminar's agenda - but rather of management, or consideration or study of a question or problem. Very often, it is necessary to resist the temptation to make hasty generalizations and to draw rapid and universal conclusions. Only common values and a common spirit - not behaviours, policies, ideas or certain norms - can be extended without intellectual and political arrogance and without damaging the richness of the human spirit. At all times, in the context of basic principles and guidelines, it is necessary to remember that there are various possibilities, various approaches, various solutions and various ideas about how societies should operate and progress. Respect for cultural differences and, indeed, the capacity for innovation in the social and political area require modesty and an open mind. The working assumptions referred to at the beginning of this report, namely that there is no perfect society, also explains this rejection of the "miracle theory" whether in respect of the "role of the market", "globalization" or "planning".

33. With regard to the need for a new ethic, or, at the very least, a renewal of moral and political philosophy, some characteristics of the discourse are of particular importance.

(i) With a few exceptions, which could be summarized in a short list of universal "commandments" derived from the concept of human dignity, it is undoubtedly preferable not to define absolute values; it is wiser to indicate clearly what is not acceptable and cannot be tolerated; the "golden rules", in general, refer to what should not be done.

(ii) The principles and values which are the most widely respected are least often stated because they are an integral part of culture and behaviours; the discourse on social progress must therefore concentrate on problems to be resolved and on the intellectual and moral approaches which are useful in finding solutions to them.

(iii) The spiritual dimension must be integrated into the discourse, must give it additional meaning, must enable it to reach the universal. The "spiritual" dimension cannot, of course, be juxtaposed with the political, economic or cultural dimension. It is an integral part of human and social reality. It gives the discourse its realism and truth.

(iv) A renewed ethic and spirituality must draw on all the sources of religions and philosophies which, by different routes but with striking similarities, extol mankind. This moral and spiritual renewal is a matter of urgency. It must be based on hope, not on fear. For example, the reactions to and rebellions against, certain forms of "globalization" are not signs of a wish to return to the past or of nostalgia, but portents of the future. They are new conceptions and new values which are emerging to save mankind. A new ethical dimension should make it possible to transcend the North/South dichotomy. A renewed spirituality must be global but diverse. It will help in rejecting a single model of social progress and going beyond simplistic solutions. It will counter materialism, the material dimension, not by rejecting it but by transcending it.

34. Enriching the discourse regarding the three main themes of the Social Summit may be briefly summarized as follows:

(i) Poverty

Poverty is material, but also spiritual; it consists of the absence of hope, boredom, solitude which is not sought but endured. It is, to a large extent, subjective, that is to say, it is what is experienced by the human being who is the "victim" of poverty. It would be better to talk of impoverishment rather than poverty. The most profound impoverishment is that of the spirit; however, it, too, can be reduced. A poor person is not only one who is hungry but also one who is oppressed, humiliated and manipulated. Reducing poverty means not only reducing inequalities and improving standards of living but also protecting and celebrating the magnificence of our planet, and adding beauty to it. More materialism is no answer to the problem of poverty. The ethic of egotism must be replaced by an ethic of kindness and care for others.

(ii) Employment, work

Effort, work, participation in creation, however humble, are at the heart of human nature and personal dignity. Ideally, for each person work should be what brings fulfilment and gives meaning and direction to daily life. Employment and work should benefit not only the individual but also the human community. It is one field in which individual interest and the common good can be in harmony.

(iii) Participation in the community and society, and their opposite, alienation

This participation, the source of social cohesion and of the integration of different individuals and groups in a harmonious whole, is both a right and a duty. There is a continuity between the humblest forms of participation - domestic work for example - and the most political forms. A society finds its identity not only through the way in which it treats its weakest members, but also the way it allows its ablest members to play a leading role. Isolation and self-absorption lead to alienation. The same is true of the hunger for power and lack of moderation. The intellectual and moral calibre of those who have the formidable privilege of directing the affairs of civic society helps mould the spirit of the times and the culture of a community. Only by resorting to the simplest and most basic values and virtues will mankind be able to find roads which have some degree of order. The discourse of the Social Summit should be a discourse of hope and a call for reflection. A philosophy of sharing and service must be encouraged and experienced. Sharing knowledge, culture and techniques means creating in common. Idealism is not a matter of dreams but of necessity.

35. To enrich the discourse of the Social Summit, a number of specific recommendations were also made during the seminar.

(i) There is a very urgent need to adopt measures, particularly at the international level, to ensure that the number of languages spoken in the world does not continue to decline as rapidly as it has during the past 20 years; an international convention should be envisaged, similar to the convention designed to protect biological diversity. Moreover, at Copenhagen, during the week of the Social Summit, a celebration of cultures that are in danger of disappearing or being marginalized should be organized. The maintenance of cultural and linguistic diversity is essential for mankind.

(ii) National systems of espionage and security involving the collection of information should be eliminated, again through an international agreement. These systems have been made obsolete by technological developments and constitute a danger for the democratic functioning of institutions.

(iii) Also at the international level, the competent institutions, and no doubt the United Nations itself, should consider the dangers involved in manipulating human beings through uncontrolled scientific developments fuelled by the lure of money and the lust for power. In particular, a "decade of the brain" could be envisaged.

(iv) Information, in all its forms, has considerable power today. This is a subject which deserves a summit comparable to the Copenhagen Summit.

(v) It would be useful to draw up an "international code of ethics" which would make it possible to prevent and combat the various forms of corruption which are a cancer in contemporary societies.

(vi) A concrete follow-up to the Social Summit should be to place social development higher in government priorities and hierarchies. This result, while modest in appearance, would in fact have a great impact on national and international policies and the spirit of the times.

36. Lastly, it was noted that the problems of our times were too serious to wait for elegant and complete "solutions". These problems require, instead, participation by everyone and joint efforts. Intermediate groups between the individual and the State, and civil society, have an essential role to play.

Appendix

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